Agricultural imports as a percentage of GDP from agriculture in India is less than 4%. India also has a surplus of exports over imports in agriculture trade. Under the existing WTO rules, India can, *inter alia,* protect its farmers by raising the applied levels of customs duties within our WTO bindings. This option has been exercised by the country, in recent past, on a number of products. The. WTO rules also permit imposition of safeguard duties, over and above, the bound level of duties, in cases import surges causing serious injury to domestic producers.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture is, at present, being re-negotiated. In the ongoing negotiations, the Indian proposals are aimed at providing necessary protection to domestic farmers against imports, retaining the flexibility for providing appropriate level of support to farmers in the country and opening up of markets for agricultural products in developed countries.

Special package for States

409.MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Centre has announced a special package for the farmers of certain States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Orissa is also one of the beneficiaries; and

(d) if so, the details of the financial and other support that is proposed to be rendered to the farmers of this poor and backward State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The Government has decided to launch a special rehabilitation package to mitigate the distress of farmers in 31 Districts in the States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradsh, Karnataka, and Kerala.

The package includes both immediate and medium term measures. It aims at establishing a sustainable and viable farming and livelihood support system through debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, crop centric approach to agriculture, assured irrigation facilities, watershed management, better extension and farming support

services, improved marketing facilities and subsidiary income opportunities through horticulture, livestock, dairying, fisheries, etc. For alleviating the hardships caused to debt stressed families of farmers in the affected districts, ex-gratia assistance from Prime Ministers National Relief Fund (PMNRF) will also be provided. In addition to state and local implementation and monitoring mechanisms, the Prime Minister's Office will monitor implementation of the package of relief measures.

The package in respect of the six districts in the Vidarbha region of Maharasthra, namely, Akola, Wardha, Amaravati, Buldhana, Wasim, & Yavatmal has been announced recently.

Packages for families of farmers committed suicides

410.SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Hon'ble Prime Minister has announced huge packages to help the families of the farmers who committed suicides;

(b) whether these packages and help would be extended to the other States like Andhra Pradesh where farmers suicide is a phenomena; and

(c) whether this is going to solve the agrarian crisis in our country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) A special package for mitigating the stress of farmers for the six districts of Vidarbha region of Maharasthra, namely, Wardha, Yevatmal, Amravati, Akola, Buldana, and Washim, was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during his visit of the region from 30th June to 1st July, 2006. The package aims at establishing a sustainable and viable farming and livelihood support system through debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, crop centric approach to agriculture, assured irrigation facilities, watershed management, better extension and farming support services, improved marketing facilities and subsidiary income opportunities through horticulture, livestock, dairying, fisheries, etc.

Similar package would be extended to the identified districts in the States of Andhra Pradesh. Karnataka and Kerala.